(c) what are the main reasons for the decline in the area under rice cultivation; and

(d) what steps are being taken to increase the production of rice to meet the increasing demand?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The area under rice during 1992-93 is currently estimated at 41.39 million hectares.

(c) The reasons for decline in area under rice cultivation was deficient rains at the time of sowing in some parts of the country.

(d) For increasing the production of rice, the Government is implementing an Integrated Programme for Rice Development (IPRD) in different States besides ensuring price and market support.

Phasing out of Tobacco Cultivators

3322. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have decided to phase out tobacco cultivation;

(b) if so, the number of farmers likely to be affected by the phase out;

(c) the loss of revenue likely to fall as a result thereof; and

(d) what alternate plan is being chalked to rehabilitate these affected farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Tobacco Cultivators in A. P.

3323. SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken note of the advice given by Prime Minister to tobacco farmers in Andhra Pradesh to switch over to other crops;

(b) if so, what steps have been taken to follow through on the suggestion;

(c) whether there is a proposal to encourage tobacco farmers to switch over to non-traditional crops like sunflower and soyabean; and

(d) steps being taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM): (a) Yes, Sir. The Tobacco Board in the Ministry of Commerce, which is regulating the production and marketing of Virginia tobacco which is mainly grown in Andhra Pradesh has taken note of the advice given by the Prime Minister to farmers in A.P. to switch over to other crops.

(b) The Tobacco Board has fixed production targets of about half of the last year's target for the year 1993-94 to match the demand and also decided not to permit virginia tobacco cultivation in Northern black soils and Central black soil regions of A.P. for the year 1993-94.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The Tobacco Board has been advising the farmers of Northern and Central black soil areas to stop Virginia tobacco cultivation in 1993-94 and switch over to alternate crops like sunflower, soyabean, pulses vegetables etc.

The Board has also requested the Govt. of A.P. to provide assistance like seed, pesticides etc. in their crop production schemes by giving preference to Virginia tobacco growers to switch over to alternate crop.